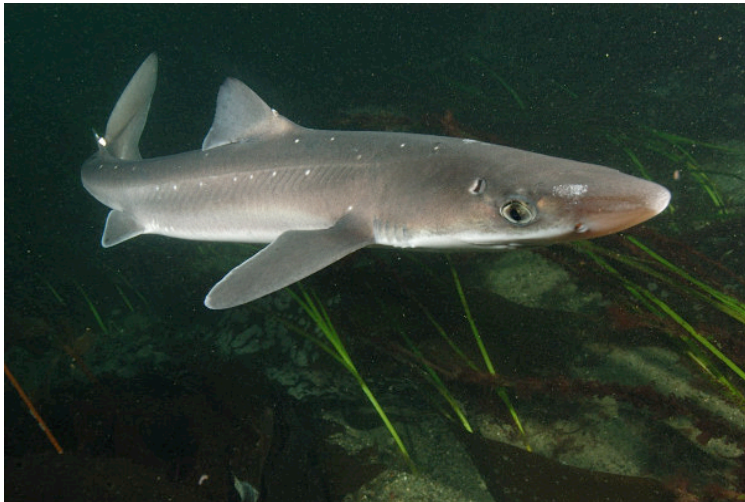


Black Sea Sharks at Risk

The Black Sea is home to world's biggest, most productive spiny dogfish sharks, but this remarkable, global species is in danger of extinction.

CITES action is needed to curb unsustainable trade ... before it's too late.



What is a spiny dogfish?

The spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*) is a small, slender shark found in temperate waters all around the world.

Spiny dogfish have been fished for their meat and liver oil for more than a century. Once the most abundant shark, spiny dogfish are now included on the IUCN *Red List of Threatened Species* due to serious overfishing from intense, poorly regulated fisheries. Persistent European demand for meat fuels fishing and international trade.

Black Sea spiny dogfish stand out

Black Sea spiny dogfish are thought to be the largest and most productive in the world. For instance, they have been shown to grow up to 80 cm larger (180 cm total) and give birth to twice the number of pups (32) than their Atlantic counterparts. Atlantic and Pacific spiny dogfish are known to be pregnant for twice as long (nearly two years!) as those in the Black Sea. Despite these differences, all spiny dogfish are vulnerable. The species is among the slowest growing sharks on earth and therefore exceptionally susceptible to overexploitation and long lasting depletion. Dogfish fishing limits must be precautionary.

Endangered populations

A population assessment for Black Sea dogfish showed a 60% decline from 1981 to 1992. The population is less depleted than in Northeast Atlantic (where roughly 7% are left), but fishing pressure is expected to remain high and lead to further depletion. The IUCN considers this population *Endangered*.

Trade restrictions and fisheries management are urgently needed

Countries bordering the Black Sea need to cooperate on a fishery management plan for spiny dogfish. In addition, listing under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), as proposed by Germany, would help keep trade to sustainable levels and encourage regional conservation.

Romania and Bulgaria can help

As new members to the European Union (EU), Romania and Bulgaria have an important role in EU shark conservation and a say in whether the EU adopts Germany's proposal to list spiny dogfish under CITES and forwards it to the 2007 CITES meeting. To save spiny dogfish, Romania and Bulgaria should:

- actively promote Germany's dogfish CITES proposal around the mid December '06 vote, and
- lead Black Sea countries in a regional dogfish recovery effort.